

# FOUR ERA

Nº 3.

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OF

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IN PRAISE OF  
THE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY  
AT WEST HARTLEPOOL,

OCTOBER 23RD, 1895.

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ILLUSTRATIONS:—

PORTRAITS OF THE MAYOR, OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE  
LIBRARY COMMITTEE, THE ARCHITECT, AND  
THE FIRST LIBRARIAN.

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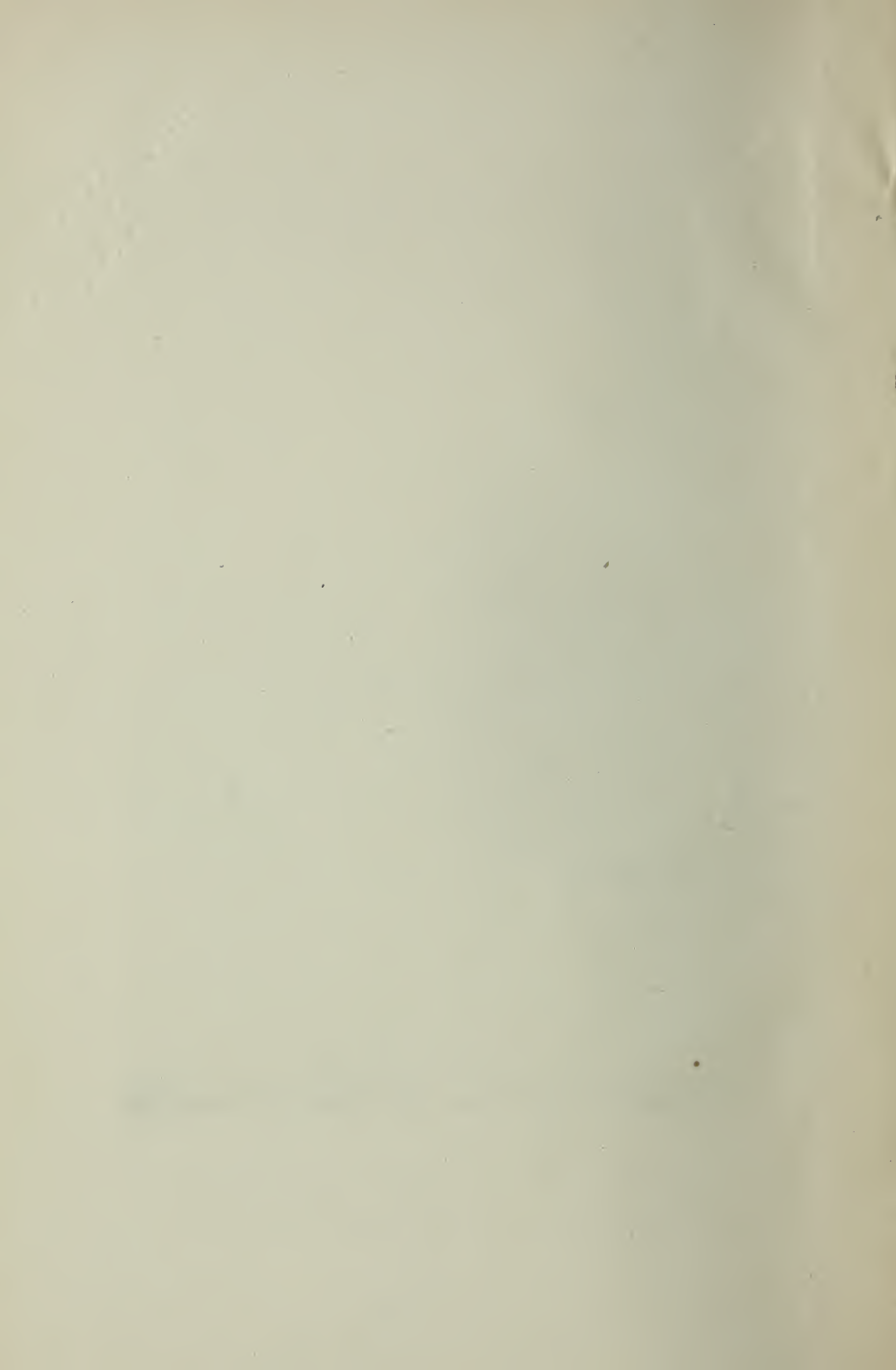
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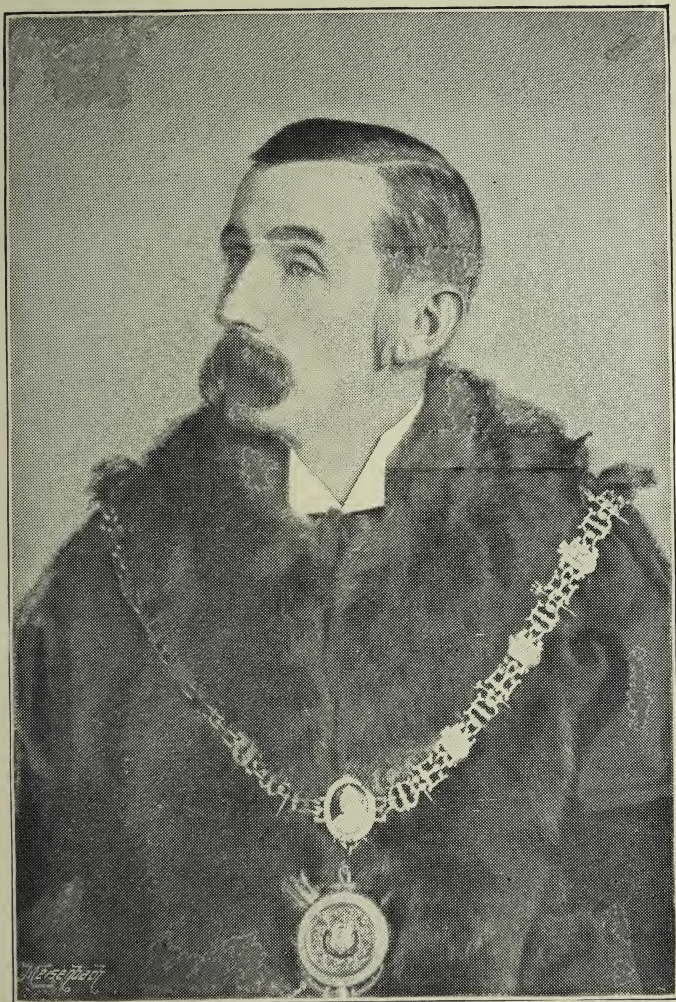
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1895.







THE MAYOR OF WEST HARTLEPOOL.

(MR. COUNCILLOR GEORGE PYMAN, JUNR., J.P.)



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# IN PRAISE OF THE FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY AT WEST HARTLEPOOL.

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Some people reckon this the fiftieth year since the propitious "first beginning of the town" of West Hartlepool. They tell of the gathering together, on the agricultural land of a certain tenant farmer, of a small group of gentlemen, professional and non-professional, who "cut the first sod," and declared it to be their intention to there found a harbour and docks—around which latter have since been grouped many habitations of men. They aver that, from this small beginning, has arisen the modern town and municipality of West Hartlepool, a great centre of commerce, a foremost representative of modern English enterprise. As in the founding of Rome, so in the founding of West Hartlepool, there is some difference of opinion as to the precise date. But our Romulus and Remus are forthcoming. The fact, and the year, each rest upon authentic testimony. The present writer, and hundreds of others, still lingering on the stage of life, and watching, while it is so ordained, with interest, more and yet more of its dramatic developments, knew the infant community before it had yet entered on its teens. Nor could we fail to note, with growing zest, as the years sped on, the advancement of its industries and wealth, the wider reaches of its expansive commerce, its consequent increase in civic and corporate importance, and the eventual upspringing of predominating demands for a higher social life, responded to with becoming intelligence and public spirit.

All that has been accomplished, in procuring for the former glowing ideal of Ralph Ward Jackson (the acknowledged founder of the town and port) "a local habitation and a name," has been achieved well within the auspicious reign of Queen Victoria. It was in the seventh year of the Queen the foundation before alluded to occurred. It was in the Jubilee Year of the Queen that the young town exchanged its chrysalis form of an urban district, governed under the provisions of a private improvement Act of Parliament, for the style and title, granted by royal charter, of a municipal borough, conferring all the prerogatives of, and all the privileges attached to, that higher form of civic self-government. And it is in what is held to be the Jubilee Year of its own urban existence, we are called upon to see the town

#### RANKED WITH THE LEADING COMMUNITIES OF ENGLAND,

which have provided for the intellectual recreation and culture of their citizens and denizens the advantages of a free public library. In what order of priority West Hartlepool must hereafter stand in the now happily lengthening list of such favoured boroughs, we shall hereafter discover. Meantime, as it is not a very long history, and is capable indeed of being condensed into a few sentences, let us first scan the origin and nature of the institutions by which these towns are dowered and distinguished.

It was in the Spring of 1850 that the House of Commons passed

#### THE FREE LIBRARIES' ACT,

The introducer and active promoter of the measure was Mr. William Ewart. For some time before it passed, the measure and its author had been regarded by some politicians, on both sides of the House, as of very little importance and "very much of a bore." Men of ideas often are. And William Ewart was a man of ideas. In season and out of season, he had tried for years to instil the doctrine into Bumbledom, that not only, as Wordsworth had said, were books—

—a substantial world, both pure and good,  
Round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,  
Our pastime and our happiness will grow ;



but that it was for the universal good, that that pastime and happiness should be open to all. He had the benefit of a splendid education himself—was a school-fellow of Dr. Pusey, Mr. Denison, and Lord Londonderry at Eton; had taken his degree at Christ Church, Oxford; had travelled much, and had learned to value the elevating influences of the libraries then open to the public in many French, German, and Italian cities; and had, in his thirtieth year, entered the unreformed Parliament of the United Kingdom, a pledged enthusiast for the promotion of popular culture. He had succeeded, in co-operation with his friend Mr. Joseph Brotherton, in obtaining parliamentary sanction for the starting of Schools of Design, the forerunners of our present Schools of Art, Art Galleries, and provincial Museums. And now, in his fifty-second year, he “entitles himself to be enrolled upon the list of England’s greatest benefactors” (as said the friend of his youth, Mr. William Ewart Gladstone, half a century later!) by his successful efforts in a cause that had few friends. His reward was to see the first Free Libraries’ Bill, after much discussion, got through the House of Commons, and, with practically no discussion at all, through the House of Lords.

The measure was simply a permissive one. Its author was one of the kindest and most courteous of men, and had made every concession, short of effacing the main proposal. Its leading idea was that of enabling the corporations, of towns of not less than ten thousand inhabitants, to provide, after certain preliminary conditions were complied with, a small amount per annum for the establishment and maintenance of free public libraries.

Mr. Ewart knew well what he was about. The huge mass of inert prejudice against any new thing, every new thing, arrested his progress and defied his advance. He pleaded for a little, and thankfully accepted that little as a fulcrum for more.

On the whole, the spirit of the time was favourably opportune. The Prince Consort was presiding on the committee for the First Great International Exhibition. Readers were multiplying. The periodical literature of England was sporadically fertilizing the

waste places of the country's budding intellect. Foreign visitors were expected. Cosmopolitan emulation was excited. The reading habit was displacing ruder and less elevating recreations. Our great cities were beginning to understand that their social well-being depended, in the main, on their own social well-doing. Leave to impose a halfpenny rate for the promotion of literary culture, did not appear to some of us an excessive extension of the prerogatives of self-government. On the whole, it was well understood, that William Ewart, courtliest and kindest of men as we have said, exercised a wise discretion, by contenting himself with a permissive act, to begin with, to quiet the apprehensions of those who dreaded a too speedy advance of general mental culture. "Better a halfpenny rate than nothing, better a permissive bill than none."

#### MANCHESTER WAS THE FIRST

to bring Mr. Ewart's Act into operation. It was the year after the then unprecedented Great World's Show in Hyde Park. Hopes of cosmopolitan tolerance were in the air. The movement for the abolition of the "taxes on knowledge" was at its height. There were no provincial daily newspapers as yet; but weeklies and bi-weeklies were beginning to accustom increasing crowds of readers to the free discussion of affairs. Then, as now, Cottonopolis was well to the front among English towns; and the Potters, Crossleys, Brothertons, and Richard Cobden, were among its leading citizens. Thursday, September 2nd, 1852, was their opening day. They had succeeded, partly by the aid of local munificence, partly by means of the halfpenny rate, to create, at Campfield, a respectable reference and lending library, open to all comers. Among the thronged assemblage which took part in the ceremony were some of the most popular authors and orators of the day. Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, Mr. Richard Monckton Milnes (the late Lord Houghton), Mr. William Makepeace Thackeray, Mr. Charles Knight, Sir Elkanah Armitage, Charles Dickens, and John Bright, were among those who accepted invitations to the scene of this "new birth of the better times." Lytton startled his hearers by informing them that the peasant poet, Robert Burns, had been the originator of a library for his

own order in the district represented in Parliament by William Ewart, the Eton and Oxford scholar. Dickens, ever genial and gay, playfully dwelt on the mysterious phrase, the "Manchester School," of which he had heard mention by political men, and declared that, henceforth, the free library, "this great free school, inviting the humblest workman to come in and be its student"—"knowing no sect, no party, no distinction"—"shall represent to me the Manchester School! And I pray to heaven, moreover," he added, "that many great towns and cities, and many high authorities, may go to school a little in the Manchester seminary, and profit by the noble lesson it teaches." The late Alexander Ireland, and Alderman Abel Heywood of Manchester, I have heard dwell with pride on their recollections of that day. It was a proud occasion for Manchester. They had founded the first Free Public Library! It was the joy of many of her sons, in after years, to observe the extent to which her noble example was followed.

Some of the sayings of that inspiring hour yet live in Lancashire. "Education, rightly considered," said the author of *Rienzi*, "is the work of a life; and libraries are the school-books of grown-up men." "I know," quoth the author of *The Esmonds*, "that our novels are but what we may call tarts for the people. History is bread, and science is bread; and historical and spiritual truth form that upon which they must feed."

And then—just as, twenty years later, it was discovered that the multitude were in favour of compulsory education—it was made manifest that the million were more than ready for this boon. A working man, Peter Cunningham, appealed to John Bright, on behalf of his order, to "see them through this half-penny hatch," alluding to the limit of rating power imposed by the first bill. In 1855 the limit *was* removed, and a penny rate substituted; and it is by aid of the penny rate most of the free libraries have since been established.

## HASTENING SLOWLY.

Dr. Clifford has said that the hospitality of the British mind for ideas is excessively limited, and its hospitality for movements is still more limited. The slow progress of the Free Public Library idea and the Free Library movement is a case in point. Mr. Thomas Greenwood has placed it upon record that in the year 1875 the number of Public Libraries formed under the Free Libraries' Acts—for by that time Ewart's Act had been revised and extended and amended over and over again—was only eighty-seven. Thirty-six years after the passing of the Act, the Parliamentary authority to apply the nimble penny to this most desirable of municipal uses had only been turned to account in a hundred and thirty-three districts. The nation had in the meantime found out that they had to make readers before books could be in large demand. Mr. William Edward Forster's Education Act of 1870 supplied the desiderated condition. The process is one that some have witnessed on a larger scale on the other side of the Atlantic. The late George Dawson, of Birmingham, saw one thing in the United States he, as an Englishman, envied. By their system of free schools, they turned out, from the most unpromising material, the children of emigrants from every Kingdom in Europe, an annual increment of intelligent American citizens; and the practical corollary of this transformation was the opening of libraries in every State. In like manner, the Free Schools of England have proved to be the condition precedent of a great extension of Free Libraries.

## LIGHT AT LAST.

We have hastened slowly, but the impetus begins to tell. To lighting, watering, paving, cleansing, and police, there has been added, as a consequence, the supply of intelligence, as one of the legitimate offices of the English municipality. There have been more Public Libraries opened in England, during the last ten years, than in any decade since the commencement of the movement; and good books for all is now a cry of modern civilization. A favourable response to that cry promises to be the crowning work



of the century. The sentiment of the hour sustains the movement and maintains its necessity :—

As a sky that has no constellations,  
 As a country unwatered by brooks,  
 As a house that is empty of kindred,  
 Unilluminated by loving looks ;  
 So dull is the life of the people  
 Who know not the blessing of books.

\* \* \* \*

Good books are the kindest of neighbours ;  
 They help us to know one another ;  
 They show how the words ' man ' and ' woman '   
 Have always meant ' sister ' and ' brother ' :  
 So they fan to life feelings fraternal  
 That the dust of the work-day might smother.

\* \* \* \*

Good books—who can measure their blessing—  
 Tell how it begins, where it ends ?  
 How they interweave Past, Present, and Future,  
 Until Time into Eternity blends !  
 They are more than companions and neighbours,  
 Good books are the truest of friends.

\* \* \* \*

Good books—they who build them a shelter  
 A place among people to stay  
 As helpers, and guides, and inspirers,  
 Our best benefactors are they.  
 And therefore the heart of this borough  
 Is grateful within us to-day.

## OUR NORTHERN COUNTIES.

It was in the North of England the development first made itself manifest. In Barnsley, thanks to the public spirited labours of Mr. Alexander Paterson, editor of the *Barnsley Chronicle*, formerly chief reporter in this neighbourhood of the *South Durham and Cleveland Mercury*, and the commendable liberality of Mr. Charles Harvey, who provided the building, a beginning was made a few years ago ; and with this result : that the Mechanics' Institute presented, unconditionally, the whole of its maps and books, its reference and circulating libraries, to be added to the general stock of the new institution. At Blackburn, there was a like history. There have been gifts of rare books and manuscripts since the library was opened sufficient to make the literary stores of this unattractive Lancashire town a resort for students and scholars from distant lands. Bradford

boasts a total annual circulation of books exceeding two millions of volumes. Dewsbury has its Free Library, and the Mechanics' Institute there voluntarily presented all its books to the public use. Doncaster celebrated its Jubilee of the Queen by a like gracious benefaction. Leeds, the manufacturing metropolis of the West Riding, has gone farther, and is rapidly making its Board Schools into branches of a splendid central institution. The quaint little town of Penrith had a Working-men's Institute and a Mechanics' Institute, both of which, with commendable good sense, have been merged in the formation of a Free Public Library. Preston has now a Museum, School of Art, and Free Library, all in one; and the library are popular and extensively resorted to in both the borrowing and the reference departments. The Salford Museum and Library is worthy of the town long represented in Parliament by Joseph Brotherton, the friend and colleague of William Ewart. Coming to

#### OUR OWN MORE IMMEDIATE DISTRICT,

the towns of Tyne-side and the towns of Tees-side have attained recognition for themselves among the most conspicuous caterers of this culture of the crowd. *Newcastle* has made up well for lost time. Not till 1874 was the Act adopted. Its news room only dates from 1882, and its reference department from 1884. But there is a splendid record since. Not a single book is missing. Several local libraries have been absorbed. There is a juvenile reading department unexcelled by any in the kingdom. Success is reported in all departments; and everyone who knows Newcastle, and its Library, also, knows there has been no more beneficent influence brought into operation, stimulating study, diffusing information, ameliorating manners, elevating public and private joys. *North and South Shields* have welcomed and adopted the free library enactments. In both towns, the old Mechanics' Institutes became friendly allies, and cheerfully contributed their books and their buildings. They have never had reason to regret their generosity. All now enjoy, freely, more than fractions formerly paid for, to the manifest benefit of all. At *Sunderland*, again, there is a somewhat similar history. The Subscription Library was purchased by the late Mr. John Candlish,

M.P., and warehoused until the burgesses decided what should be done with it. Ultimately, the Free Library Acts were adopted, and since then the Free Public Library has become the centre of ever-growing attractions. There is a museum and winter garden, reading rooms, lending library, reference library—and not a single malcontent left to say Sunderland is not well met in its social and intellectual cravings. So with *Gateshead-on-Tyne*. An inviting air of studious quiet pervades the library, which dates from November 9th, 1885. Its juvenile section rivals that of the Tyne Metropolis, at the other end of the Stephenson High Level Bridge. The reading room is regarded by Mr. Greenwood—no mean judge—as a model of convenience, comfort, and good taste. So has it been at Quaker *Darlington*. The late Edward Pease left some £10,000 for educational purposes, to be spent at the discretion of his brothers. Mr. (now Sir) Joseph Whitwell Pease bought up the local Subscription Library to be conjoined with the gift. By and bye, the ratepayers adopted the Acts, and the trustees supplied the building, a model of its kind, completely furnished. Besides the lending and reference libraries, and a general reading room, there is a ladies' reading room and a committee room; the latter, I regret to observe, converted into a kind of substitute for the old subscription institution, accessible to a select circle. This is a deviation from the spirit of the Free Library Acts "more honoured in the breach than the observance." In a public rate-supported institution, there should be no preferences. However unobjectionable in form at the outset, however safeguarded against abuse, the whole history of our educational endowments and public foundations shows, that it is a dangerous proceeding to permit the first encroachment of privilege. In other respects, the library is all that could be desired. It has furnished two librarians to London; and the present chief is an ideal man of books, tactful, courteous, skilful, and well-informed. I can speak from personal observation as to the influence of this particular library on the habits, manners, and intelligence of the young. You can feel the improving presence of the library everywhere in Darlington.

Three northern municipalities remain to be noticed—

BIRTHS OF THE PRESENT CENTURY—

Barrow, Middlesbrough, and West Hartlepool. *Barrow-in-Furness* was a “made” town. A London traveller visiting the place twenty years ago narrated with great gusto how ludicrously this fact was impressed upon his mind by the uniform answer his questions as to ownership called forth. At the railway station, he was told “it was all one concern.” At the hotel, at the newspaper office, at the general printing office, at the docks, at the shipyard, at the ironworks, “it was all one concern;” and he came away from the precincts with the half persuasion that, had he gone to the police station, the parish overseer, or the pawn-shop, there would have been no variation in the reply. The late Duke of Devonshire’s fostering care was over all. The Free Library, however, is a civic creation. The Acts were adopted in 1887. Mr. Fielden gave the building. Reading room and lending library are in fair condition. Their juvenile department is doing well. Their Librarian, Mr. Thomas Aldred, is a good statistician, and has now nearly 20,000 volumes under his care. Gifts are flowing in, that build up the institution; and Barrow has a future before it, all the brighter because it possesses a storehouse of knowledge which the townsmen regard as their own. *Middlesbrough*, like Barrow, is of modern growth. We have conversed with persons who knew its site a barren mudland on the shifting shore. Its Free Library has been crippled by a heavy rent charged against it by the Corporation. The nucleus of a Museum exists, and the making of a great Library is here; but the ideal of its best well-wishers cannot be said to be as yet fully realized. The management appears to stand in need of more publicity. Public Libraries, like hardy plants, require light and air. The issue of books is satisfactory, about ten thousand volumes a month; but the stock grows slowly. Let it be remembered, however, that these two towns, like that which remains to be named as now inaugurating its Library, have had every work belonging to the building up of a commercial existence to do in a very short period of time. From their levelling and drainage to their street making and housing—all the essentials of a town



and port,—factories, docks, railways, courts, concert hall, custom house, schools, churches,—everything,—have been evolved as from nothing. And yet their tale is one of improvement. And everybody who knows Barrow and Middlesbrough agrees, that the towns would be less worthy of their vast populations, and of the intelligence and public spirit by which they are distinguished, were it not for their free reading rooms and libraries.

Last, not least, of the three towns that owe their birth to the mining and engineering enterprise of the nineteenth century, comes West Hartlepool, whose

#### LOCAL LIBRARY ANNALS

are, up to date, “short and simple” as the annals of the poor. There are few in West Hartlepool, and only one or two out of it, who witnessed the “founding” of the Athenæum, in the winter of 1851-2. It was to be the first unsectarian public building in the town. The site and the material were practically given, and the labour was to be found by faith. Fewer still remember the opening night, with “the founder of West Hartlepool” in the chair, an eloquent divine, a dean from the West Riding on the rostrum, and genial James Farrer, one of the Members for South Durham, amongst those on the platform. It is not difficult to recognise, however, one of the well-kempt, cleanly looking young boys, brought forward in an interval between the speeches to chant or sing “Hearts and Homes,” in a certain still juvenile looking magnate of the borough.

There was literally no town then, except on paper. The streets that had got into bricks and mortar were fractional and straggling. Every house had the appearance of a temporary settlement. The nearest church was that of Old Stranton village, of which the Rev. H. R. Ridley (uncle of the present Home Secretary) was the incumbent. The nearest theatre was the canvas-covered booth of Billy Purvis, then performing “Black Eyed Susan” and similar sailor heroics at Old Hartlepool. Yet an Athenæum was being erected, just as a church and schools were being built, because the *genius locii* was determined that the new town, he was engaged in

forming, should include every known refinement of English life. It was a constant remark of Ralph Ward Jackson's, that "We must keep up with the times," and another was that "We have no aboriginals to keep us back— West Hartlepool will be manned from the first by able men from the enterprising parts of the country." Both sayings were true.

#### THE ATHENÆUM

was made worthy of both. Gradually, the nucleus of a library—a store-room overcrowded with unread publications from the Patent Office—the nucleus of a museum—the actuality of a lecture room and school of art, and the slow lounge of a reading room, not to speak of the sub-let council chamber of the Town Improvement Commissioners of 1854, came to have their common home in the oblong limestone building at the junction of Lynn and Church streets! And there the building, and some few of its fulfilled functions, stand before us to-day, ready for adaptation! I think I hear Mr. Jackson's clear decided voice, saying to the new men of the old institution, "Merge your library in the Public Library, gentlemen; we must keep up with the times!" Mr. William Charles Ward Jackson is coming to the town to perform the opening function of the West Hartlepool Free Public Library. Possibly he may speak the wise words his father might have spoken? As a matter of fact, the Library and Mechanics' Institute, so well adapted to forty years ago, has been a hindrance rather than a help to the establishment of the Public Free Library in West Hartlepool. This is not an uncommon occurrence. Throughout the country, there have been three stages in various towns—(1) open or concealed aversion, (2) stubborn resistance, and then (3) graceful concession—on the part of existing institutions, towards the beneficent "friend of all and enemy of none," the rate-established Free Library. The last stage has yet to come at West Hartlepool; and it is as certain as anything of the kind can be, that to-day will hasten, if it does not indeed realise, the advent of that last stage.

#### STEP BY STEP.

There is a common saying to the effect that "the inevitable accomplishes itself." The phrase has the fault of after wisdom; but

a deep truth underlies it all the same. The public needs of an intelligent community, once they are clearly acknowledged, *have* a knack of getting themselves supplied. The evanescent, indefinable group of personal and civic virtues we include under the generic phrase "public spirit," is a potent agency, and realises in sober fact many an apparently unattainable ideal. And there is no lack of public spirit in West Hartlepool. The Jubilee Borough is brimful of the activities which are the outcome of it. In a marvellously brief space of time, it has housed its Town Council, Board of Guardians, and parochial authorities, while its Technical Instruction Institute and Art Classes are about to enter into possession of their separate home. It was the necessary corollary of these developments that the Free Library should come; and we have it now.

I find an early indication of the coming triumph, in a certain electoral address to the South-West Ward, bearing date "9th October, 1893." At the end of his first period of three years' public service in the Town Council, Mr. George Pyman, junr., was seeking re-election as a representative; and, to his honour be it remembered, he put in the forefront of his address the following declaration:—

"First and foremost, I am, and have always been, strongly "persuaded of the paramount importance, especially to the younger "generation of the working-men in the town, that the Free Library "Act, already adopted, should be put into immediate working order; "and I pledge myself, if returned, to use all the efforts in my power "to bring about a consummation in every way so desirable."

The redemption of that pledge is, I take it, the history of

#### A SUCCESSFUL MOVEMENT.

Mr. Councillor Pyman, it will be seen, had been three years in the Council. Those three years had witnessed the inception of the movement, which he now publicly pledged himself to bring to a practical issue.

Glancing over the record, prior to this date, we find that, in December, 1890, a month after Mr. Pyman's first election, the

promoters of the movement had got so far as to elect a Town's Free Library Committee. That Committee consisted of His Worship the Mayor (Alderman R. Lauder), Sir William Gray, J.P., County Councillors C. Furness, and G. H. Baines, Aldermen George Pyman and J. W. Cameron; Councillors Thomas Clarkson, E. D. Cockell, C. Macfarlane, and George Pyman, jun.; Revds. H. E. Savage, M.A., and Thomas Lawson; and Messrs. A. C. Burge, W. R. Dixon, J. Dunbavand, Thomas Noddings, A. Bassett, T. W. Smyth, Alex. Adams, and H. Wetherell. The public meeting at which this first organization was formed was convened in the Temperance Hall, and the Committee assembled in the premises of the Young Men's Christian Association. At the public meeting it was affirmed by formal resolution that

“In the opinion of this meeting of ratepayers of the borough “of West Hartlepool, it is deemed most desirable that a Free “Library should be established in the town; and this meeting “further pledges itself to use every legitimate means to bring about “the adoption of the Free Library Acts.”

This first meeting was presided over by Mr. Councillor George Pyman, jun., who has thus, from the very outset of the movement, heartily commended the action whose approval was ratified by his constituents in 1893. For it is a noteworthy fact—and may as well be noted here, though somewhat out of chronological order—that the reply of the workingmen of the South-west Ward to the straightforward “first and foremost” address, was, that they re-elected the champion of the Free Library over his opponent by 618 votes to 285—a majority of 332, or more than two to one!

When the committee thus formed assembled, on the 15th of December, a notable advance was, under reservation, reported. The Mayor (Alderman R. Lauder) was enabled to state that under certain conditions an excellent building site free of cost to the town would be presented. This would get over one of the difficulties before them; and it was proposed that the committee should add to their representative membership and go unflinchingly forward. There were



then added to the committee—Mr. Henry Withy, J.P., Mr. Alderman Thos. Robinson, Councillors Jos. F. Wilson and W. Tomlinson, Dr. Biggart, Dr. Davies, and Messrs. J. P. Fea, A. Leckie, M. Robinson, Geo. Jones, H. Horsley, Thos. Blenkinsop, F. L. Beck, Edwin Birks, Jas. Birks, J. C. Harding, Geo. Brack, Fred Clapham, and Jas. Stobart.

Of course, the mystery surrounding the generous proffer of a site was in due time dispelled. It first transpired in current gossip of the town, and afterwards leaked out in the shape of a local press *communiqué*, that two past Mayors, Sir William Gray, J.P. and Alderman George Pyman, J.P., were the donors. These gentlemen are now reckoned among the “old standards” of West Hartlepool. They are intimate friends. During the residence of the latter at the Willows (he has more recently retired to his country seat—Raithwaite Hall, near Whitby), their intercourse was frequent as well as intimate. When the new Municipal Buildings in Church-square were erected, and the residence of the late Mr. Joseph Parkin came into the market, it was suggested to Mr. Alderman Pyman, by his son, that the latter would be a valuable acquisition for the town; the suggestion took root, and the two friends agreed to acquire it between them, which was done. Then arose certain pourparlers, between the town’s committee, constituted as we have seen, and the Athenæum committee, presided over by Dr. Gourley. It is not necessary to recall these negotiations further than by stating that the town’s Committee did not succeed in gaining the favourable consideration of their project which the townsmen generally desired. To most abortive negotiations the homely old proverb generally applies: “least said soonest mended.” There remained the alternative of gently hinting to the owners of the splendid site, acquired in the manner we have explained, what a favourable opportunity now presented itself of turning it to account. It may be that these gentlemen thought they had made a good investment for themselves as well as for the town. However that may have been, they hesitated not. On learning the position of the committee, and of the work they had in hand, they at once generously declared the site

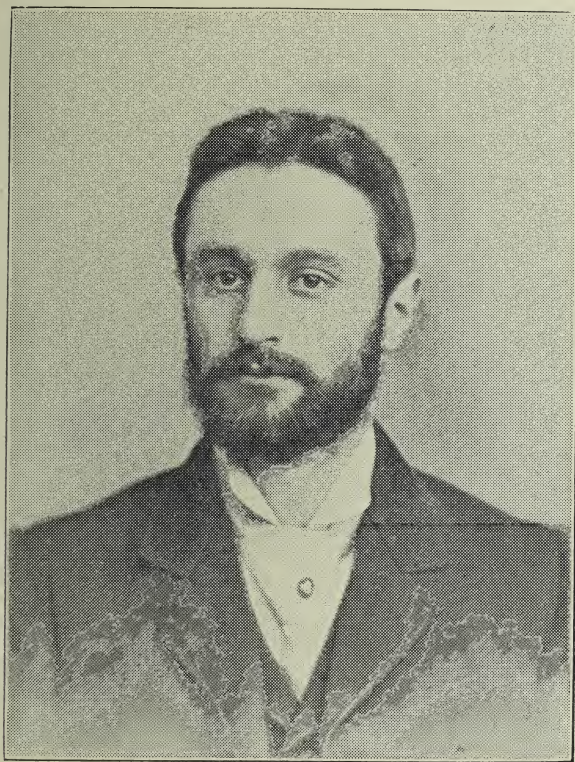
at their service, on one condition—and that was that within six months they could show they were doing something, were making real progress, towards the beneficent purpose of getting the Free Library for West Hartlepool established. Needless to say, the gift, with the annexed conditions, was gratefully accepted.

Real progress was soon shewn. There is a statutory preliminary, as everybody knows. A resolution, adopting the Free Library Acts, has to be passed by a public meeting of ratepayers authoritatively convened for that specific purpose. This is an ordeal often shrunk from. It is thought by some enthusiastic promoters of the movement, to be an insuperable barrier in many towns. It did not prove so in West Hartlepool. The public meeting was held under the presidency of the Mayor (Ald. Lauder) and had a most satisfactory result. Out of two thousand nine hundred and thirty-four ratepayers polled, one thousand nine hundred and sixty-six—a majority of over two to one—declared for the adoption of the Free Library Acts, and thus laid a strong foundation for subsequent action. This was in June, 1891. On the 7th of the following month, the Town Council, acting on the mandate of their constituents, appointed a Library Committee of the Corporation, to carry out their behest.

This first Committee of the Council was composed as follows :—

Alderman Sir William Gray,	Councillor Cockell,
„ Cameron,	„ Macfarlane,
„ Geo. Pyman,	„ Geo. Pyman, jun.,
„ Thos. Furness,	„ Suggett.

We read in one of the local newspapers of about this date, that there was really only one public man in West Hartlepool opposed to the Free Library movement—and the newspaper named the gentleman, much in the spirit of rebuke that is implied when the Speaker of the House of Commons “names” a recalcitrant Member! But this somewhat random assertion was considerably wide of the mark. As a matter of fact, the Council, and even the Library Committee of the Council, contained irreconcilable opponents. The penny rate to be expended under the adopted Act, was resisted on pretexts of poverty,



MR. ALBERT WATKINS,  
*First Librarian.*





of inexpediency of one sort and another; and, at last, while bowing to the behest of the ratepayers in letter, an attempt was made to defeat it in spirit, by reducing, to a half-penny in the pound, the amount of "ways and means" to be provided! On the 7th of March, 1893, an amendment, to the effect "that the rate be reduced to one half-penny," was actually carried, on a division, by a majority of one vote! Those who voted against this amendment were, Sir William Gray, Ald. Thomas Furness, Ald. Lauder, and Councillors Loan, Kirsop, Miller, Pyman, Macfarlane, and Grainger. The spirit of the "half-penny hatch," appealed against by John Bright at Manchester, was thus being revived, forty years later, at West Hartlepool! This was the last open opposition, however; and marks the receding tide. Henceforward there was smooth water and speedy progress. If hard words were spoken on either side, they are forgotten, in the generosity of temper and feeling which arose from the sense of a great good having been secured for the inhabitants of the town. Party feeling was felt to be out of place, in discussing a matter of vital moment to the intellectual elevation of the people, after the main question has been decided by the popular vote. It is now plain enough, to the perception of even the dullest, that attempts to further thwart a beneficent movement, which has been thus far promoted with spirit, moderation, and success, would expose its authors to well-merited public resentment.

#### GATHERING THE BOOKS.

Of course the work was not nearly finished—it was in effect only begun—when the Acts were adopted, and a central site secured for the Building, and the nucleus of a fund secured by means of the local rate. All these things brought us only a short way. The essential feature of a library is its books; and all the books had to be begged or bought. The selection and arrangement of a library requires a skilled librarian; and, in the formation of an entirely new collection of books, care, discretion, and tact are as necessary as technical skill. The selection of librarian had to precede the selection and cataloguing of the library treasures to be committed to his care. The committee accordingly advertised for a skilled and

experienced librarian, with the ultimate result of the appointment to this important office of Chief Librarian of MR. ALBERT WATKINS, of London, and the subsequent appointment of Mr. George Downs, as assistant.

There can be no doubt that by this timeous appointment the Committee have been greatly facilitated in an economical and effective performance of their next chief responsibility. Upwards of eight thousand volumes of books have been selected, purchased, classified and catalogued.

The alphabetical or "dictionary" form of cataloguing has been adopted, whereby any enquirer is made certain of his quest, if he happens to know either the subject, the title, or the author's name of which he is in search.

There are ten classes of books to be found in the New Library, viz. :—

*A.*—Theology, Philosophy, and Ecclesiastical History.

*B.*—History.

*C.*—Biography and Letters.

*D.*—Science and Art.

*E.*—Travels and Topography.

*F.*—Poetry, The Drama, and Dramatic Literature.

*G.*—Law, Commerce, Politics, Statistics, Education, and Social Science.

*H.*—Miscellaneous Literature.

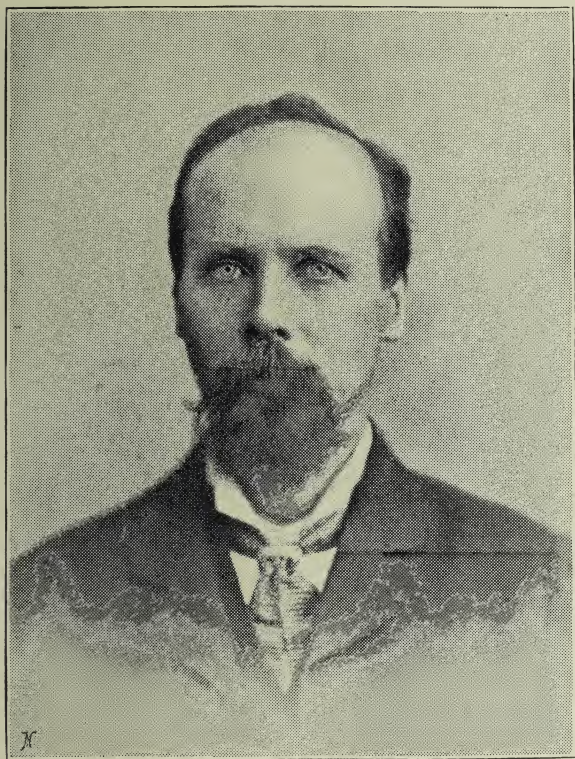
*I.*—Juvenile Works.

*K.*—Prose Fiction.

All the improved modern methods for identification of readers and works, in and out, are adopted for the lending library, and a card catalogue is in use for readers who resort to the constantly increasing reference department.

A condensed advertisement of the regulations adopted for the conduct of both will be found on the cover of this sketch.

The catalogue—just issued—is printed by Mr. F. W. Mason, of West Hartlepool, and is a credit alike to its compiler and publisher.



MR. J. W. BROWN, A.M.I.C.E.,  
*The Architect.*



We have no doubt, whatever, that it is being issued to the public of West Hartlepool at about one-half its actual cost. This act of wise liberality cannot fail to quicken its circulation, and consequently enhance the rate at which the books catalogued will reach the hundreds for which they have been provided. Other towns following West Hartlepool in the adoption of the Free Library Acts may also follow with advantage this specially excellent example.

#### THE BUILDING—FOUNDATION CEREMONY, &c.

On Saturday the 20th of October last year, in the presence of a considerable crowd of interested onlookers, the donors of the site, Aldermen Sir William Gray and George Pyman, were each publicly presented by the then Mayor (Mr. Alderman J. Suggitt) with a silver trowel and ebony mallet. Square blocks of granite, respectively inscribed with the names of the donors, were *in situ* ready to be "laid." The function was "got through" effectively, with the usual votes of thanks to the gentlemen whose gracious gift of the site enabled the work to be proceeded with. It was then incidentally mentioned that Mr. Davison, of Stockton, was contractor for carrying out the whole of the work, in accordance with the excellent design of Mr. J. W. Brown, A.M.I.C.E., the town surveyor and architect. Mr. Councillor Macfarlane, as Chairman of the Library Committee, set forth in fitting terms, the hopes and expectations of the promoters. Mr. Councillor George Pyman, jun., in a graceful and elegant address, thanked the assembled company for their tribute to his father, and bespoke for the new institution that loyal appreciation which its genesis and its beneficent aims are so well-calculated to inspire. His closing quotation, from the poem of Dr. Wendell Holmes, pronounced at the opening of a similar institution in his native Boston, was particularly effective, and its closing stanzas may not inappropriately be recalled to-day:—

LET IN THE LIGHT! these windowed walls  
 Shall brook no shadowing colonnades;  
 But day shall flood the silent halls  
 Till o'er yon hills the sunset fades.  
 Behind the ever open gate  
 No pike shall fence a crumbling throne,  
 No lackey's cringe, no courtiers wait—  
 THIS PALACE IS THE PEOPLE'S OWN.



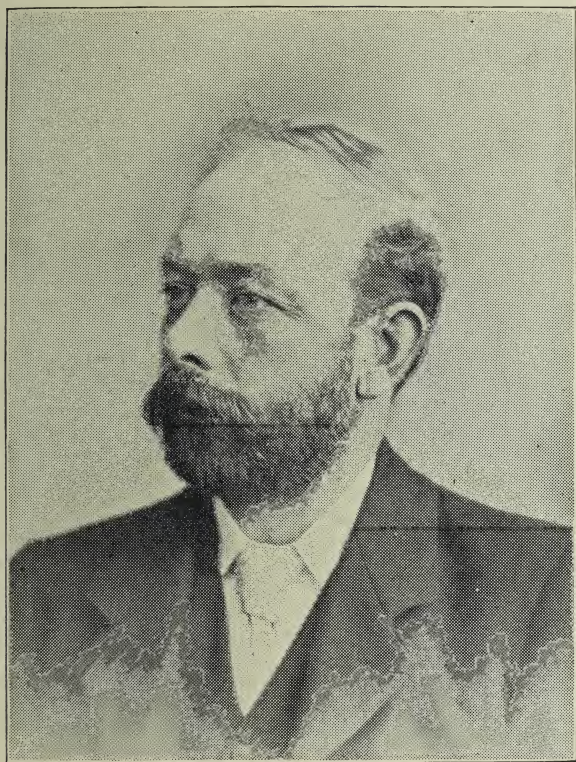
Mr. Councillor Macfarlane, Chairman of the Library Committee, was also specially thanked for his consistent labours and strenuous aid to the good work. A felicitous observation, by Mr. (now Sir) Christopher Furness, is worth remembering. He said that "West Hartlepool possessed literally no monuments of the past; but the founders were inaugurating that day a monument for the *future*."

We observe, in the long list of names of those present, one—Mr. Thomas Maugham—who was also present at the founding of the Athenæum, and whose recent removal from our midst is remembered to-day. All who knew him loved him. His manly, modest presence is, alas, only a memory now!

Descriptions of the buildings, with much technical detail, appeared in the newspapers of the day. It is an excellent structure for its purpose, and has the additional merit of harmonising well, in style, material, design, and general effect, with the Municipal Buildings which are adjacent.

#### CROWNING THE MUNICIPAL YEAR.

The municipal year, now approaching its close, will leave its mark, broad and deep, on the annals of the progressive Jubilee Borough. By an agreement that cannot be regarded as in any sense accidental, the chief Magistrate chosen last November was no other than the gentleman whose name has occurred again and again in this brief story of the genesis of the West Hartlepool Free Library. No personal modesty, no editorial compunction, can obliterate or ignore his special services to this cause. He presided at its first public inception, he was deputy-chairman at the first committee, he pledged himself to see the business through when its greatest danger was the apathy of others, and he invoked enthusiasm and help when hope was low and finances lower still. Let others boast of the Mayor's vast mercantile belongings, eminent family connections, great commercial influence, consistent public career. We, for our part, value still more highly the straightforward determination with which he has devoted himself to this noble work of winning for gentle and simple men and women and young folks of all degrees the blessing



MR. COUNCILLOR MACFARLANE,  
*Chairman of the Library Committee.*



of an open temple of knowledge, in which neither rank nor party, sectarian or social distinctions are known. The Mayor's appreciated activities, in obtaining improved railway, postal, and telegraphic facilities; are well-known. His zealous co-operation with others in respect of the new Technical Institute and the new Public Assembly Hall has been appreciated. But his purposeful persistency in pressing forward the movement for the Free Library has been the monumental achievement of his term of office; and the opening of the West Hartlepool Free Library will be the crown of his municipal year.

His Worship has had an able lieutenant in Mr. Councillor Macfarlane, a master of detail, who has been described as "a perfect glutton for work," and to whom has necessarily fallen, as Chairman of the Library Committee for 1894-5, a large share of departmental labour. If any man in West Hartlepool knows the secret of that nearness to genius which is said to consist in an infinite capacity for taking pains, that man is Councillor Charles Macfarlane; and the excellent results he has accomplished, by the aid of a good librarian, architect, clerk of works, and committee, mark him out as a man whom his townsmen cannot afford to forget.

#### MR. WARD-JACKSON.

It was a peculiarly felicitous suggestion—whether it was the Mayor's or another's—to invite to the Opening Ceremony—and, indeed, to make the central figure in the interesting function—Mr. William Charles Ward Jackson.

Elder denizens of West Hartlepool remember "Mr. William Charles," when his tall slight figure and gentle mien were familiar in a scene of rambling half-shapen streets on shore, or on board the first steam yacht that fascinated old salts on the out look from the pier-end. I remember well the pathetic interest some gentlemen of this county took in the young magistrate of West Hartlepool, when the pitiless tempest of litigation assailed his father's spotless name, and arrested the progress of his enthusiastic toil. But all that is ancient history now. The sons, and the sons' sons, of those who were first attracted to the town of West Hartlepool by Ralph Ward Jackson's

enterprise, will now gather around this representative of the old Cleveland family, and welcome him to the town, which is the monument of his father's most fruitful years. There are ample evidences on every hand that those he treasures in affectionate recollection are unforgotten here. One great commercial dock bears his mother's and another his father's name; the Public Park is the Ward Jackson Park, and is about to be adorned by raising on a pedestal in its centre a marble statue of the Founder of the Town. His portrait, once presented to the local public, and preserved in the Athenæum, is treasured now in the Town Hall close by.

The old Athenæum is likewise to be denuded of its Science and Art Classes, for which a fitting home is about to be provided. Nigh forty years have come and gone since the Athenæum was the only centre of illumination in the infant town. The grown men and the young men, of another era, have larger needs and greater opportunities than the West Hartlepool of those days ever knew. Will the opening of the portals of the Public Library not suggest to some, how fittingly they might add to the public satisfaction, by handing over what remains of the institute their fathers founded to the governing body of the town, to be by them utilized for the greatest good of the greatest number, as their fathers desired? There are some who entertain this generous expectation; and it is always well to believe the best and hope the best. In the presence of the good work accomplished in the Opening of its Public Free Library, there is an opportunity for magnanimity which may *never return again*.





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The Lending Library is open to the public from 10 o'clock in the morning until 9 in the evening, except on Thursday in each week.

The Reading Room and Reference Library are open to the Public every week-day, from 9 30 a.m. until 10 p.m.

Books may be borrowed for home reading, by persons resident in, or rated for, the Borough of West Hartlepool; rate-payers, whose names appear on the current Parliamentary Registers, may obtain books on their own responsibility; any other person, resident in the Borough of West Hartlepool, by obtaining the signature of a ratepayer. Application forms may be had from the Librarian, on payment of One Half-penny.

Persons temporarily resident in the Borough, will be permitted to borrow books, on depositing their value with the Librarian, the amount to be remitted on the return of the volumes, less a charge of Sixpence per week.

Persons not being ratepayers, residing outside the Borough, may, with the Committee's approval, obtain a Borrower's Ticket, on payment of a subscription as follows :—

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Books cannot be issued to the same Borrower more than once, if required by another Borrower, nor can a second issue be made on the same day.